

SR 7 Route Development Plan (Phase 1)

Stakeholder Committee Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: September 29, 2005

Location: Bob Lyle Community Center, Morton WA

Invitees: *Stakeholder Committee*

Albert Mcaughan – Mineral Citizen
Jim Gerwig – Morton City Hall
Joan Reed-Nickerson – Mt. Rainier Scenic Railroad
Danna Hadley – Forest Service
David Knies – Washington State Patrol
Craig Robbins – WSDOT Morton Maintenance
Steve Bell – Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife
Christie Greiter – Chamber of Commerce
Gerri Bartlett – Sterling Savings Bank
Fred Eckenberg – Cowlitz Tribe
Mark Cook – Lewis County
Dennis Hadaller – Lewis County Commission
Douglas Hayden – Lewis Mountain Highway Transit
Dean Lokken – Morton Citizen/Cowlitz River Historical Society
Rosemary Siipola – Southwest Washington Regional Transp. Planning Organization
April Doolittle – Centralia College
Dr. Tom Anderson – Morton General Hospital
Fred Schwindt – Bicycle interests
Dave Garcia, Tim Johnson – Hampton Lumber Mill

Attendees: *Stakeholder Committee*

Christie Greiter, Morton Chamber of Commerce
Tim Johnson, Hampton Lumber Mill
Dave Knies, Washington State Patrol
Jim Gerwig, City of Morton

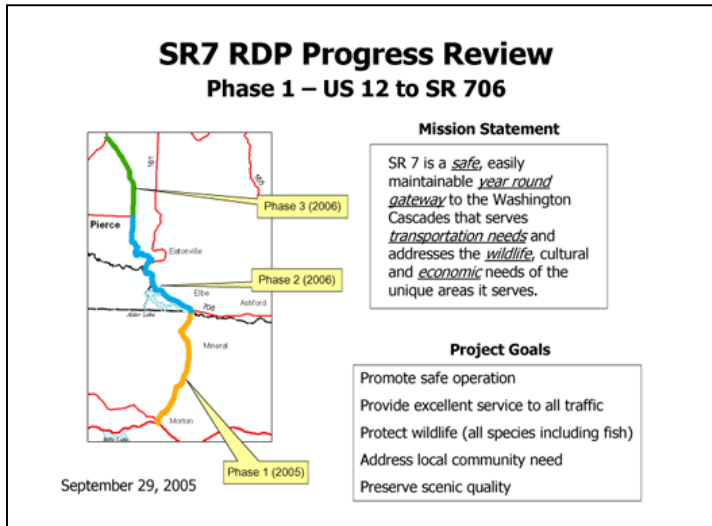
Staff

Lynn Hakes, WSDOT Olympic Region
Karyn Anderson, WSDOT Southwest Region
John Donahue, WSDOT Olympic Region
Vicki Steigner, WSDOT Olympic Region
Bob Jones, WSDOT Olympic Region
Seth Gallant, WSDOT Southwest Region
Mike Williams, WSDOT Olympic Region

WELCOME

John Donahue, WSDOT Olympic Region, opened the meeting by welcoming the attending stakeholders.

John explained to the committee that since our last meeting, the team has been working to develop the



recommendations for State Route 7. The team successfully presented these recommendations recently at an in-progress- review with Southwest Region and Headquarters WSDOT. He explained that the in-progress-review provides an opportunity for internal discussion and approval before presenting the study findings and recommendations to the public. The team will be sharing these recommendations with the stakeholder committee and, in mid-October, with the public at the upcoming public meeting. The goal is to obtain endorsement of these recommendations from the stakeholder committee and the public.

SOLUTIONS – SEGMENT 1

Lynn Hakes, WSDOT Olympic Region, described the recommendations for Segment 1, inside the City of Morton's Urban Growth Area (UGA).

Lynn began with a description of the US12/SR 7 intersection. Lynn explained that the first 500 feet of SR 7 beginning at US 12 is limited access. Traffic analysis at this location indicates that this segment of SR 7 is functioning well regarding vehicles queuing at US 12, and there are no recommendations for change.



At the intersection of Westlake Avenue and SR 7, three problems were identified:

1. The highway is extraordinarily wide, with 45 feet of paved surface to the west of the fog line and the curb delineating the corner of the Chevron Station property, making it difficult for pedestrians to cross.
2. Lane delineation that has been identified by the community as confusing, especially during snowy conditions. It is especially difficult to tell where southbound vehicles should be queuing to turn right at Westlake due to the wide paved surface.

3. Poor access control in the northwest quadrant of the intersection (by the Chevron Station), making turning movements unpredictable.

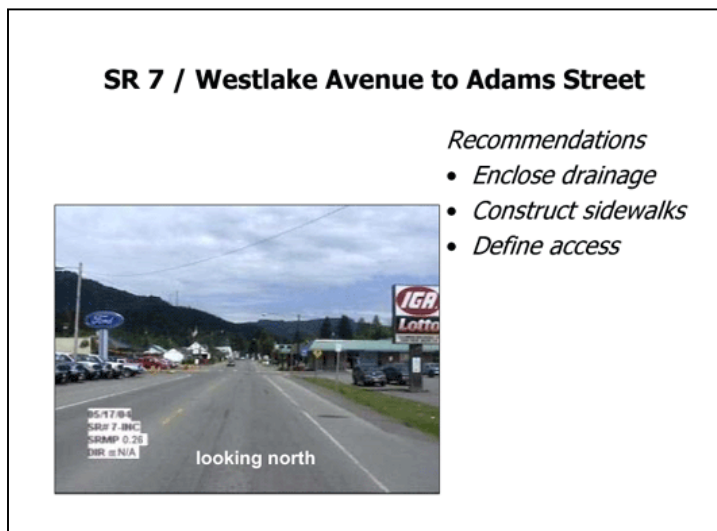
The proposed solution:

Construct curbs and sidewalks, leaving an eight-foot shoulder (consistent with current shoulder widths at this location) on the west side of SR 7. Traffic analysis has determined that the southbound right turn lane is unnecessary to maintain an acceptable level of service, and could be removed to narrow the roadway even further. This solution would make this segment of SR 7 easier for pedestrians to cross, help define the roadway, and provide better access control.

As an alternative to this solution, the stakeholder committee for the US 12 Scenic Byway study is considering a gateway treatment for the city of Morton. The preliminary concept is to build an island in SR 7, where the community's statue of a logger could be placed. Because the segment of highway between US 12 and Westlake Avenue is functioning well as it is configured, WSDOT does not support locating an island there. However, WSDOT does own approximately 200 feet of right of way just north of Westlake Avenue, and it appears that it would provide enough space for an island with statue, sufficient lane widths and required clear zone for traffic. Coupled with sidewalks, the island could benefit pedestrians by providing a refuge, help delineate the roadway and provide better access control at the SR 7/Westlake Avenue intersection. WSDOT is willing to work with the community on the design if this gateway treatment is advanced.

A solution at this intersection will require the participation of the City of Morton.

Lynn discussed problems between Adams Street and Westlake Avenue. Three problems were identified at this location:



1. Pedestrian safety while walking along the shoulder of SR 7
2. Deep drainage ditches, identified by motorists as hazards, especially during snowy or icy conditions
3. Lack of access control

The proposed solution:

Enclose the drainage ditches, and continue the sidewalks from Adams Street to Westlake Avenue. This solution would improve safety for pedestrians and drivers, and improve access control.

A solution on this segment of SR 7 will require the participation of the City of Morton.

At the intersection of SR 7 and SR 508/Davis Lake Road, the following concerns had been expressed:

1. Traffic control
2. Turning trucks
3. Sight distance

SR 7 / SR 508 – Davis Lake Road Intersection

With city agreement, recommend improving sight distance by extending loading zone curb markings in NW quadrant



The solution proposed:

The solution at this location improves sight distance by increasing the loading zone curb markings in the northwest quadrant from the existing 26 feet to 76 feet. It would not help to extend the loading zone/no parking beyond the additional 50 feet, because the buildings obstruct the view at that point.

The traffic control at the SR 7/ SR 508/Davis Lake Road intersection was analyzed. Level of Service is adequate through the year 2030. A signal or four-way stop is not warranted, and is not recommended. However, if the city of Morton feels that the flashing stop/caution light causes

confusion at this location, WSDOT will consider removing the light and controlling traffic at SR 508 and Davis Lake Road with stop signs only.

Consideration was given to modifying the curb at this intersection to increase the turning radius to accommodate the longer wheelbase trucks. However, modifying the turning radius would require the repositioning of the stop bars and cross walks, exacerbating the sight distance problem caused by the buildings at this intersection.

There are sign bridges located near this intersection that have been found aesthetically objectionable by some community members. WSDOT will work with the City of Morton should they desire to move the sign bridges and/or replace them with another type of sign.

A solution at this intersection will require the participation of the City of Morton.

SR 7 / Fairhart Way Intersection

Sight distance impaired by high embankment and vertical and horizontal curves

Recommend reshaping embankment



Referring to the picture, Lynn explained that the sight distance at SR 7 and Fairhart Way was identified as a problem.

The proposed solution:

Reshape the embankment in the southeast quadrant of this intersection to improve sight distance.

WSDOT's evaluation of this intersection found the sight distance at this location to be at or very near design manual standards. However, the steep grade approaching the intersection might reduce the margin of error compared to a more typical situation. Two things interfere with the line of sight at this location, the high bank along the roadway, and the steep, short horizontal and vertical curves approaching the intersection.


Local plans call for making Fairhart Way a one-way northbound road. This would eliminate the need for the southbound left turn pocket on SR 7. There would be a possibility of shifting the alignment of the northbound lane of SR 7 to the location of the existing turn pocket. However, the pavement is not wide enough at this location to shift the entire roadway, and additional construction would be necessary.

Of the solutions considered at this location, the most cost effective is reshaping the embankment, which is located at least partially on WSDOT owned right-of-way.

SOLUTIONS – SEGMENT 2


Karyn Anderson, WSDOT Southwest Region, covered the potential recommendations outside the Morton UGA (Segment 2). Recommendations include turnout locations, law enforcement turnouts, chain up/ chain off locations, road improvements at specific locations, shoulder and rumble strip improvements and wildlife.

A consistent concern heard from the public has been the lack of turnout locations, pull out locations and the narrow shoulders that exist along SR7.



Slow Vehicle Turnout Milepost 6.0

- LOS C generally, LOS D in climbing
- Climbing locations are in difficult terrain for highway expansion
- Design Manual - use of Slow Vehicle Turnouts where trucks predominate and cost of providing an added lane is prohibitive



looking north

Recommend paved turnout area with proposed length of 450 feet


The traffic forecast indicates a 2030 Level of Service of C with the trucks volumes at about 20%. Level of Service drops to LOS D between MP 5-7 northbound and MP 13-14 southbound due to the steep grades on SR 7.

The Design Manual describes the use of slow vehicle turnouts in conditions where trucks predominate and where the cost of an added lane would be prohibitive. These climbing locations indicated are in tough terrain with very steep banks. Developing the necessary length and width for adding an additional lane in these areas would be cost prohibitive.

However, construction of slow vehicle turnouts appears to be a viable alternative. Paving and signing a number of existing locations would provide turnouts spaced approximately 2 miles which should provide vehicles a reasonable chance to pass slow traffic. The photo of milepost 6.0 is at a good location for a slow vehicle turnout and it is at midgrade.

Milepost 14.1 is another example of a potential Slow Vehicle Turn Out location with adequate space. Turnouts will be at least 10 feet wide and 500 feet in length.


Milepost 2.8 is an example of a potential location that only needs minor grading. Adding a slow vehicle



Slow Vehicle Turnout Milepost 2.8

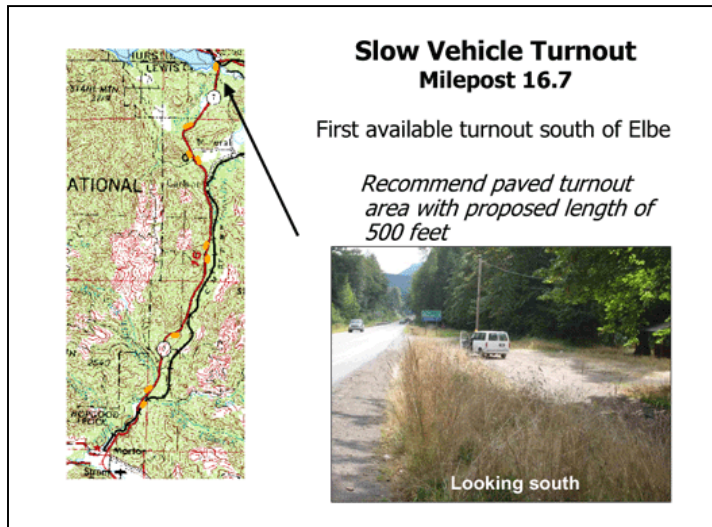
- Only minor grading
- Solves passing zone concerns

Recommend paved turnout area northbound and southbound



looking south

turnout at this location should also solve some of the access and passing zone concerns heard from the residents of the brick houses across the highway from this location. Converting this section of the highway to a no-passing zone is not recommended because of the lack of alternate passing opportunities. Input from the general public, who do not reside in this area, indicates that this should be kept as a passing zone since it is the only place to pass for several miles. We are recommending a slow vehicle turnout at this location to help solve some of these issues by providing a safe refuge for turning vehicles and an opportunity to pass slow vehicles.

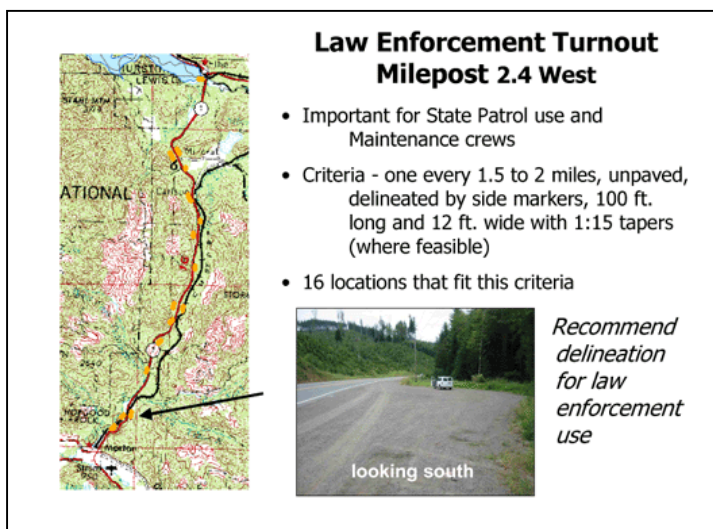


Milepost 16.7 is an example of a potential Slow Vehicle Turn Out location at the northern end of the study area near Elbe and SR 706. This is a good large existing location that we are recommending to serve traffic as a turnout.

The State Patrolman stated, on more than one occasion that they could do a better job of enforcing the law, if they had a place to pull over motorists.

As there is no formal guidance for siting law enforcement pullouts, the team gathered input from HQ design and developed criteria for siting these locations. It was determined that an

unpaved pullout every 1.5 to 2 miles, delineated by side markers would be sufficient. The pullouts will be 100 ft. in length and 12 ft. wide. The length can accommodate 2 large trucks, and the width provides a minimum safe width for the officer. During a recent field visit, the team identified seven locations on the east side of the road and nine on the west side (16 locations) that fit this criterion. Some are well developed and would require only additional delineation, while others would require some construction. Milepost 2.4 is a good example of a potential law enforcement pullout.




Milepost 8.7 is a good example of a law enforcement turnout location that would only need minor improvements, some clearing and possible grading.

Another issue of concern is icy and snowy road conditions throughout the winter season. The team heard this from the public and WSDOT Maintenance crews.

Thirty-nine percent of all accidents occurring outside of the Morton UGA happen in snowy and icy conditions. Therefore, based on public input and accident data, 4 locations were identified that meet the criteria for a chain up/off location. A

chain up/off area is usually located in widened areas, where the grade is 6 % or less and preferably on a straight section of roadway located at either end of the high elevation locations.


Milepost 5.2 northbound represents a good chain up location. Milepost 14.4 is another good example of a chain off location, heading northbound.



Chain Up/Off Areas Milepost 5.2 East

- 39% of the accidents outside of the Morton UGA occurred in snow or ice conditions
- Criteria- Widened areas, grade less than 6%, preferable on a tangent

Recommend two chain up and two chain off areas



looking north


Chain up location

Shoulders

There are approximately 6 miles of roadway within the study area that have shoulders that are less than the 3 ft. Design Standard. The public, WSDOT maintenance staff and law enforcement have all expressed concern about the narrow shoulders along SR7. We are recommending widening the shoulder width to meet design standards.


Shoulder Rumble Strips

SR 7 meets design standards for installing shoulder rumble strips based on the number of run-off-the-road accidents in the corridor. Sixty-nine percent of all accidents occurring outside of the Morton UGA are run-off-the-road accidents, therefore we recommend installing rumble strips and widening shoulders to the necessary width requirements.




Shoulder Rumble Strips

- SR 7 meets Design Manual criteria for installing these rumble strips
- This is based on number of run-off-the-road accidents- 69% of the accidents outside of the Morton UGA were run-off-the-road accidents.



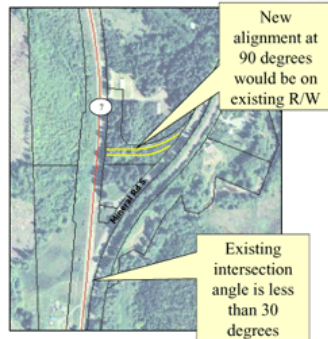
Recommend shoulder rumble strip be installed along entire route (requires shoulder width of 5 feet throughout)

Mineral Road South is the primary connection between the communities of Mineral and Morton. Mineral Road South meets SR 7 at an acute angle of less than 30°. There is a short cutoff road north of the intersection, which meets SR 7 at a 90° angle. North and southbound vehicles were observed using this cutoff in order to improve their sight distance. Therefore, we are recommending that the intersection angle be corrected to increase safety at this location.



Mineral Road S. Intersection Milepost 11.66

Recommend relocate intersection to improve entry angle




New alignment at 90 degrees would be on existing R/W

Existing intersection angle is less than 30 degrees

The improvement would include creating a new standard radius curve and tangent section so that Mineral Rd. South would arrive at SR 7 at a 90° angle, as shown in the picture. WSDOT’s investigation revealed that the most favorable location for this realignment corresponds with the location of a state-owned parcel whose exact ownership and intention is still being researched at this time.


There were three locations identified by the public as potentially benefiting from a left turn pocket. These three locations were Mineral Rd. South, Mineral Rd. North and Pleasant Valley Rd. The roadway geometric configurations were examined and traffic turn movement counts were performed at these locations.



Mineral Road N. Intersection Milepost 13.17

Left Turn Pockets

- Potential locations identified (Mineral Rd. S., Mineral Rd. N., Pleasant Valley Rd.)
- Mineral Rd. N. traffic counts highest with crest vertical curve north increasing stopping sight distance



Recommend left turn pocket due to limited SB sight distance and grade approaching intersection

looking north

Of these three locations, the left-turning traffic counts were highest at Mineral Road North. There is a crest vertical curve immediately north of this intersection with a grade that would increase stopping sight distance at this location. It will be the recommendation of the RDP that a left-turn pocket be constructed at Mineral Road North.

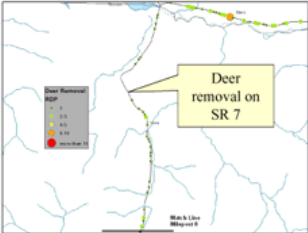

WSDOT’s Environmental Affairs Office maintains a database of deer and elk mortality. They have identified where maintenance performs deer removal activity around the state. This picture takes a closer look at SR 7 and shows it has less activity than originally thought, however, if you look closely at the map, a hotspot is developing in close proximity on SR 706.


This has been a concern raised by the public and at stakeholder meetings and it is apparent the community is very interested in decreasing wildlife mortality and increasing wildlife awareness. While the current deer removal data may not support a strong presence of doe and buck, the public would definitely argue this point. Any coordinating that can be done with WSDOT Environmental regarding signing spacing would therefore be recommended within this RDP.

Wildlife Findings on SR 7

- Low number of doe and buck reported by maintenance
- Strong sense of importance in community


Recommend coordinating with Environmental Affairs Office regarding signage



Murray Road Intersection Milepost 3.32

- Bridge rail and associated guardrail at bridge approach, both rails lying within the line of sight at Murray Rd.
- Murray Road sits below grade of SR 7 and further impairs drivers line of sight.



Recommend improve intersection sight distance by raising elevation of the road

looking south

Murray Road is located at milepost 3.32. This road has been brought to our attention by some of the public as a road with sight distance issues. The photo on this slide was taken while standing on the stop bar at Murray Road. There is a bridge rail and associated guardrail at this bridge approach that block the driver’s view of oncoming traffic. The fact that Murray Road sits below grade of SR 7 further impairs the driver’s view. Therefore, we recommend the local jurisdictions improve intersection sight distance by raising the elevation of Murray Road.

The current configuration of the roadway was analyzed using the Bicycle Compatibility Index model, or BCI. This model was developed by FHWA to help evaluate the relationship between roadway physical and traffic conditions, and the experience of bicyclists using the road.

Non-Motorized Improvements

- Pedestrian issues not indicated
- BCI (bicycle compatibility index) is moderate
- Not identified by WSDOT or other jurisdictions

No specific non-motorized recommendations at this time



The resulting analysis shows the BCI for SR 7 as moderate. SR 7 has not been identified by WSDOT, or any other jurisdictions, as a priority for non-motorized improvements. The shoulder width recommendations mentioned earlier will also improve conditions for bicyclists; therefore there are no specific non-motorized recommendations.

Near-term recommendations, such as sign placement, vegetation removal or icy road conditions are transmitted to our traffic office and maintenance office for consideration.

PARTNERSHIP FUNDING GUARDRAIL

During the 2005 session, the state legislators passed the Transportation Partnership Funding Package, which included \$1.7 million for roadside safety improvements on SR 7.

Staff looked at 37 places along the study route that had higher societal costs associated with run-off-the-road accidents. Shoulder widths, the length and degree of slope, the recovery area, and clear zone were measured and evaluated. Of the 37 locations, staff identified nine that might warrant improvements. These locations have been selected independent of the established WSDOT High Accident Corridor/High Accident Location safety program. Following are the locations:

Milepost 1.3

Located on the east side of SR 7: The alignment of the highway is good, but safety might be improved by slope flattening to improve the recovery area.



Milepost 1.9 West (800 ft section)

Outside of substandard curve
Inadequate recovery area/clear zone
Steep embankment to river

Recommend widen shoulder and install guardrail



Milepost 1.8

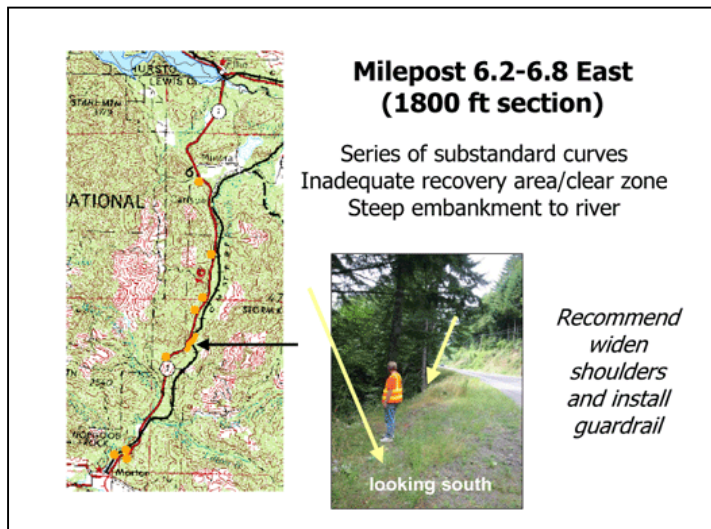
Located on the east side of SR 7: Steep slope at the outside of a substandard curve. Recommend widening the shoulder and installing guardrail.

Milepost 1.9

Located on the west side of SR 7: Steep embankment to the river, outside of a substandard curve with inadequate recovery area and clear zone. This is the site of the 2003 fatality. Recommend widening the shoulder and installing guardrail.

Milepost 5.5

Located on the west side of SR 7: Outside of substandard curve with inadequate recovery area and clear zone. Recommend widening shoulder and installing guardrail.



Milepost 6.2 to MP 6.8

Located on the east side of SR 7: Series of substandard curves with inadequate recovery area and clear zone, and a steep embankment to river. Recommend widening shoulders and installing guardrail.

Milepost 7.6

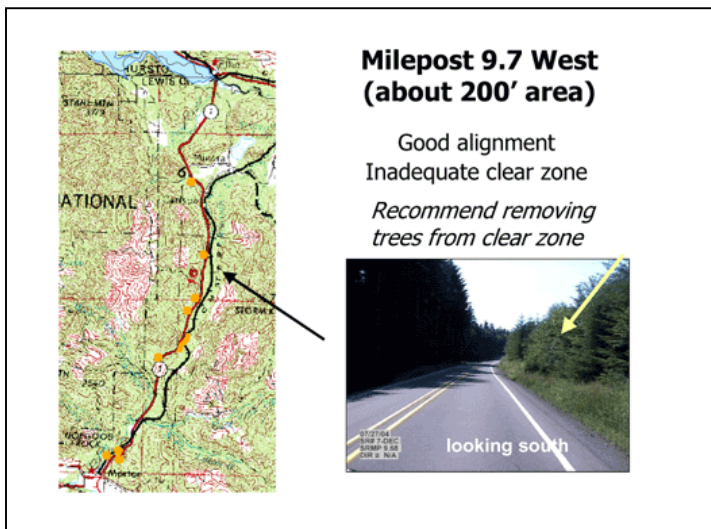
Located on the west side of SR 7: The alignment of the highway is good, but safety might be improved by slope flattening to improve the recovery area.

Milepost 8.1

Located on the west side of SR 7: The alignment of the highway is good, but safety might be improved by slope flattening and removing objects from the clear zone. The rock wall should be researched to determine historical or cultural significance, if any.

Milepost 9.7

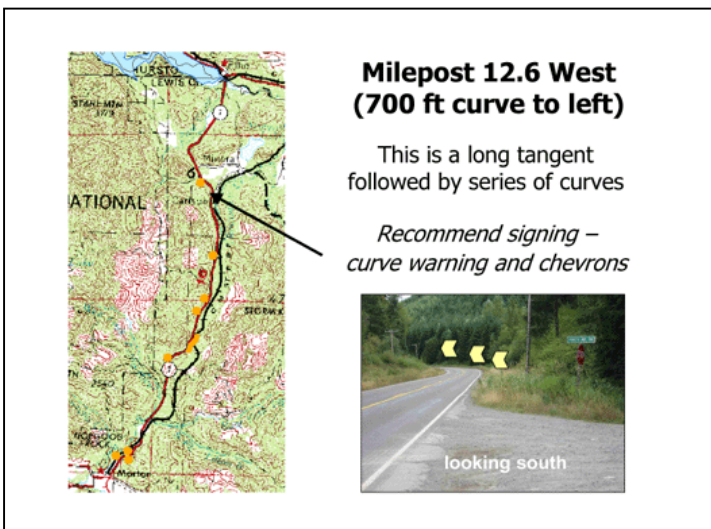
Located on the west of SR 7: The alignment of the highway is good, but safety might be improved by removing trees from the clear zone. Ownership of the trees needs to be determined.



Milepost 12.6

Located on the west side of SR 7: Long straight away, followed by a series of curves. Curve and roadside features appear to meet design standards. Recommend placement of a curve warning sign, and chevron signs to alert drivers to the curve.

Subsequent to the passage of the funding package, citizens filed Initiative 912, which would repeal the tax increase that would fund the safety improvements. The initiative has been placed on the ballot to be voted on in the November general election. Should the initiative pass, the \$1.7 million will no longer be available for use on SR 7. These safety improvements would then have to compete statewide for funding.



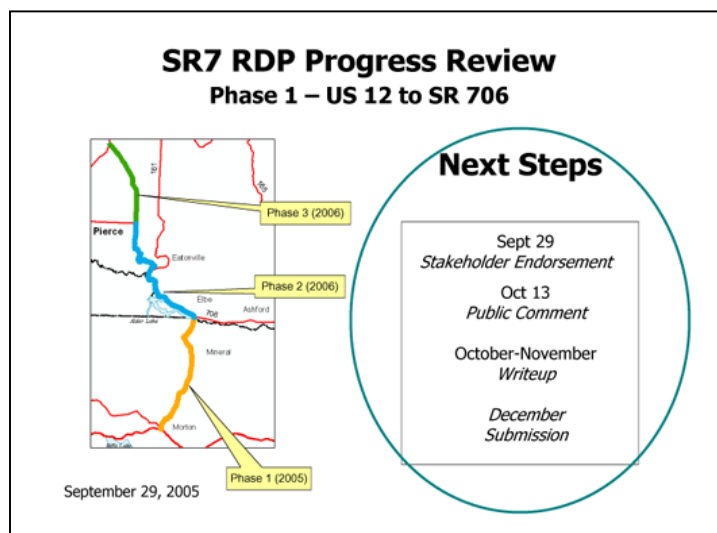
DISCUSSION AND ENDORSEMENT

The team asked the Stakeholder Committee for endorsement of the proposed improvements.

The Stakeholders offered the following comments and recommendations:

- Need wider shoulders at milepost 16.7 near Elbe. This is a stretch with frequent speeding. (State patrol) Maintenance noted that there are extensive wetlands in this area that could limit our ability to widen the roadway. The necessary permits and mitigation will be addressed during the design phase of the project.
- Law enforcement turnouts – should be paved or receive bituminous surface treatment so that they can be plowed. (Maintenance)
- Some of the clear zone deficient locations may have trees out of our ROW. (Maintenance) Ownership of the trees and permission to clear the shoulder will be obtained during the design phase of the project.
- The bridge at Milepost 3.32 has a bad curve and approach – add, “Straighten approach to bridge at Murray Road” to our recommendations and improvements.
- WSDOT’s Bridge Office could review bridge condition at milepost 3.32 (Vicki/State Patrol)
- Milepost 12.6 needs more improvements. There are several accidents at this location due to snow, ice and speed. (Maintenance)
- Low plantings on the “Ole” island to define island are recommended to help Maintenance identify the location while plowing snow.
- Elk are downtown according to WSP. This would be a good location for a wildlife crossing sign.
- TPA Projects – signing at milepost 12.6 will be included in the recommendations of the RDP.

NEXT MEETING DATE



The study team will take the recommendations as amended by the Stakeholder Committee to the public meeting on October 13th. If the public recommends significant changes we will hold a 5th Stakeholder Committee meeting on October 27th to resolve issues. If not, this will be the last stakeholder committee meeting. Committee members will be notified by email if the October 27th meeting will be held.

The team thanked everyone for coming, being a part of this process, and for volunteering their time over the course of these past several months. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.